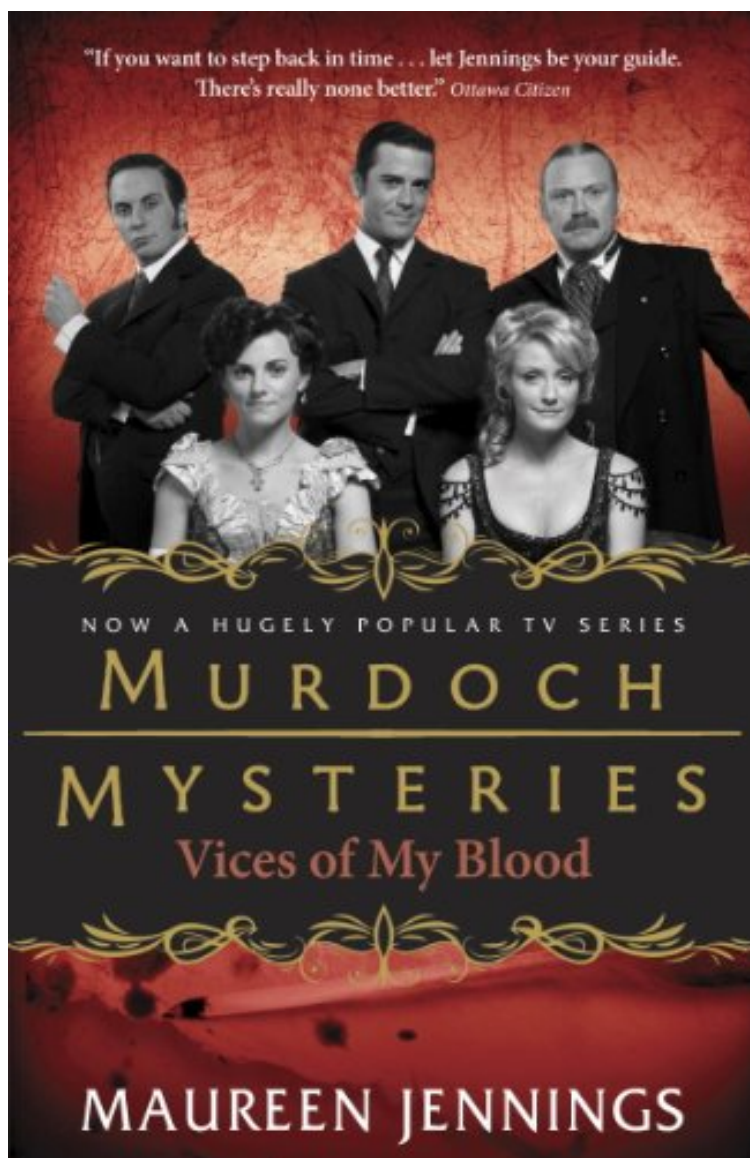


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Vices of My Blood



Par Maureen Jennings
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe compelling new novel by Canadas answer to Anne Perry. In his forties, the Reverend Charles Howard still cut an impressive figure. A married Presbyterian minister in Torontos east end, Howard was popular with the congregation that elected him, especially with the ladies, and most particularly with Miss Sarah Dignam. Respected in the community, Howard, as Visitor for the House of Industry, sat in judgment on the poor, assessing their applications for the workhouse. But now Howard is dead, stabbed and brutally beaten by someone he invited into his office. His watch and boots are missing. Has some poor beggar he turned down taken his vengeance?Murdochs investigation takes him into the arcane Victorian world of queer plungers men who fake injury all the better to beg and the destitute who had

nowhere left to turn when they knocked on the Reverend Howards door. Extrait CHAPTER ONE William Murdoch had recently been promoted from acting to full detective and given a raise in wages of three dollars a month. But his new status was not reflected by a better office, and from his desk he was contemplating the same old furnishings of a battered metal filing cabinet and a visitors chair that the rag-and-bones man would have rejected. The walls, he noticed, would benefit greatly from a fresh coat of paint, as he was wont to use the one wall as a blackboard and the chalk marks never quite rubbed off. He needed a new lamp, or at least some better oil, as the one on his desk was smoking badly. Having made this gloomy assessment, he took a gulp of the hot strong tea that hed brought in from the duty room and got back to his task. He dipped his pen into the inkwell. He had a fine working fountain pen in his pocket, but he couldnt bring himself to write a letter to his absent mistress with a pen his beloved deceased fiance had given him. Dear Enid. I havent yet received a letter from you, but I hope that is only because of the bad weather and not because you dont want to write to me. How is your father faring? He paused. That last line seemed ridiculously stiff. But hed have to leave it. This was the third draft hed started. Oh just cross out faring, for Christs sake. How is your father? I do hope his health is improving. Of course, the reason she had not written could be because her father had died. If that was the case he wondered if she would return to Canada. And then he wondered how he would feel about that if she did. It had been almost two months since she had been summoned back to Wales to take care of her ailing parent. This had been the primary and acknowledged reason for her departure, but they both knew that sitting just behind it was Murdochs inability to make up his mind to marry her. Another dip in the ink and he made a large blot on the page. Damn. These pens were police issue and leaked badly. His fingers were stained already. Tell Alwyn I am thinking of him. I have still got his sled and . . . Hed been going to write and I look forward to the time when he returns, but that was implying a promise he didnt know if he could keep. He looked at the letter. It was a mess with two crossing-outs and three blots. He crumpled it up and threw it into the basket with the others. Hed write later at home, not here at the police station where there were distractions. Hed heard the clack of the telegram machine in the front hall and decided to get up and see if anything interesting had come over the wire. It had been a quiet day so far. He swallowed the rest of his tea and went out into the main hall. There were no miscreants or supplicants gracing the wooden bench that ran around the room and it wasnt time for the shifts to change so the only two officers present were the stenographer, Callahan, and the duty sergeant, Gardiner, who was sitting at his high stool behind the desk. He grinned when he saw Murdoch and waved a piece of paper. Weve got a telegram from Hamilton. Callahan just typed it up. You might want to have a look at it. He handed Murdoch the wire. be advised stop watch for queer plungers stop we suspect a supposed family of three stop woman mid age stop younger man stop one boy about eight to ten years old stop could be related to either stop probably in toronto and working the king street area stop aliases given as mrs wright and son bobbie stop no name for man stop very convincing stop Murdoch saw that Callahan was watching him curiously, but he averted his eyes immediately when Murdoch glanced his way. The constable was almost obsequious in his dealings with the detective, whom he feared. With good reason. Murdoch couldnt stand the fellow. He walked over to him. Youre no doubt wondering, young Liam, what a queer plunger is. Callahan nodded, apparently unsure how he was supposed to reply. Murdoch perched on the edge of the desk. Never be afraid to admit you dont know something, young Liam. You dont want to be a constable third class forever, do you? Callahan flushed. No, sir. Thought not. Our lad is ambitious, sergeant. Dont let that fresh-faced, just-off-the-boat look fool you. Right, Liam? Murdoch was goading him to the point of eruption, but the stenographer swallowed hard. He smiled a snake smile but his eyes were dark with anger, and Murdoch could see that thoughts of revenge were churning in his mind. He didnt care. He knew very well that Callahan was as two-faced as the month of January. He gestured at Gardiner, who looked puzzled by Murdochs uncharacteristic incivility. Explain to the lad, sergeant. Gardiner pursed his lips, going along with it. Queer plungers is a cant term for folks who commit fraudulent acts upon the public. Typically, they work in groups of three or more. For instance, a favourite trick is for one of the group to pretend to be despondent, and in full view of a crowd, he will plunge into some water, the lake or a river like the Don. The second member of the gang will then effect a rescue. The half-drowned one will be taken to the closest house. They always make sure its a tavern or failing that a church just emptying of the congregation. Then there is some cock-and-bull story about why the poor man wanted to commit self-murder in the first place. Debts of honour, most like. A go-around is suggested so he can redeem himself. Another go-around for the rescuer. Get the picture? Revue de presse Jennings brings to life a violent but vital society of astonishing contradictions. New York Times Book Jennings has always had a fine eye for telling details and good characters. Globe and Mail [Nights Child is] a

well-written, tightly plotted mystery. . . . We feel the chill of the poorly heated rooms. Quill Quire